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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 000481

SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ARPI

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TAGS: PARM PREL PGOV PTER KU

SUBJECT: FM AND SENIOR MP TELL U/S BOLTON IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION A CONCERN; SAY ARTICLE 98 WILL PASS

REF: 04 USUN 2176

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: During a January 29 visit to Kuwait, Under Secretary Bolton shared with FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed and MP

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Mohammed Al-Sager U.S. concerns about Iran's nuclear activities and the firm belief that UNSC involvement is necessary. Bolton said the U.S. was following the European negotiations with Iran, but was skeptical that any agreement could be reached when the two sides have opposing goals. The U.S. continues to believe that the IAEA Board, when in meets in June, should recommend the matter to the UNSC, and welcomed assistance from the GOK with the board member countries that also belong to the OIC. Dr. Mohammed and Al-Sager agreed that Iran poses a threat to the Gulf and said GCC members have been very blunt with the GOI about its nuclear aspirations. Dr. Mohammed recommended exhausting all diplomatic channels, while Al-Sager favored "power and force." Both, however, believed it was useful to continue U.S.-GOK consultations on Iran. On other issues, Dr. Mohammed and Al-Sager promised passage of the Article 98 Agreement, although Al-Sager called for a more active GOK role in advocating the agreement in Parliament. They also expressed concern about recent security incidents in Kuwait and hoped for a peaceful election in Iraq. End Summary.

There's Nothing Civil About Iran's Nuclear Program

12. (C) Referring to their September meeting on the margins of the UNGA, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton told Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on January 29 that he was in Kuwait to follow up Dr. Mohammed's suggestion to talk about the threats posed by Iran's nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs (reftel). Bolton explained that Iran's nuclear aspirations are cause for concern, and equally troubling are measures to develop the capacity to deliver such weapons. There is no need for such a high level of activity for purely civilian uses. Moreover, reports that Iran is trying to fit a warhead into the nose of a Shahad III suggests a sophisticated interest in weaponization. It is important that the international community address this threat and Iran's violation of obligations under the NPT. Bolton added that the U.S. believes the time is right for UNSC involvement and left with Dr. Mohammed a non-paper on options for dealing with Iran's nuclear program in the UNSC. He further stated there are no/no plans for military action against Iran and that the U.S. does not support an attack by Israel.

UNSC Involvement Will Put Security Ahead of Commerce

13. (C) Bolton told Dr. Mohammed that although the U.S. and its European partners had the same goals regarding Iran's nuclear program -- that Iran not acquire nuclear weapons --, we differed on approach. Europe believes continued negotiation with the GOI will succeed. The U.S. sees no reconciliation between Europe's insistence that Iran abandon its uranium enrichment program and Iran's clear refusal to do so. As long as negotiations continue between the EU-3 and Iran, the IAEA will not refer the matter to the UNSC. The June meeting of the IAEA Board may be crucial. He welcomed the GOK's recommendations on how to approach the June meeting and how best to interact with the four OIC members on the board -- Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen, and Pakistan. In the interim, the U.S. would continue to encourage Russia not to ship fuel to the Bushehr reactor and China not to provide technical assistance. Bolton reported that Russia is aware of Iran's activities, but is reluctant to cease all nuclear cooperation absent additional proof. There has been some success with China through the enforcement of unilateral sanctions. Nevertheless, UNSC involvement would be more effective given the authority vested in the body and the need for Council members to make decisions based on security and not their commercial interests. Bolton also noted concerns about DRPK cooperation with Iran on missile development.

14. (C) Responding to Dr. Mohammed's questions about Libya's former capabilities, Bolton reported Libya had asked Pakistani national A. Q. Khan to provide all the technology and equipment to construct a weapon. Nevertheless, since Qadhafi's December 2003 decision, the Libyan program was stopped at an early stage. Libya's nuclear program now rests in the U.S. and the GOL has agreed not to purchase missiles outside of the MCTR constraints. As a result, there has been increasing bilateral coordination. Bolton noted that Iran could learn from the Libyan example.

GOK and GCC Do Not Support Iran's Nuclear Goals

15. (C) Dr. Mohammed welcomed the Under Secretary's comments and said the Gulf countries are extremely concerned about Iran's nuclear technology program and ambitions. Iran's activities, according to the Foreign Minister, "present an uncertainty that we cannot live with." This concern was expressed at the last GCC meeting. He added that Kuwait's National Assembly recently questioned the GOK about the Bushehr plant and plans to protect Kuwait from a Chernobyl-like event. Kuwait also fears Iranian development of chemical and biological weapons. Additionally, Kuwait is deeply worried that Israel might launch a preemptive strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. Despite these concerns, Dr. Mohammed reported that Gulf states want to give the Europeans time to reach a deal with Iran before resorting to the UNSC. They believe diplomacy can succeed and have encouraged Iran to act responsibly. Dr. Mohammed added that during FM Kharazzai's October 2004 visit to Kuwait, he cautioned Kharazzai that Iran is alone with regard to nuclear issues and there would be no support from the GOK or GCC. Dr. Mohammed opined that a large part of the problem is the Iranian psyche: Iran is surrounded by neighbors that possess nuclear technology and developing such technology is a matter of national pride that transcends political, economic, or social schisms. He added that press reports on possible military action against Iran muddied the issue and caused the GOI to dig in its heels. Dr. Mohammed hoped a successful election in Iraq would exert pressure on Iran -- and others in the region -- on the need for reform, and may afford opportunities for "creative diplomacy".

Kuwait to Focus on Home-Grown Terror

16. (C) Turning to other security issues, Dr. Mohammed asserted Kuwait's determination to confront terrorists and prevent militants from crossing the borders. He said Kuwait is focusing more attention on domestic threats, including financiers of terror activities, and working closely with its neighbors, especially Saudi Arabia. He added the GOK followed with great interest news reports of a possible dirty bomb in Boston and was concerned about domestic use of a similar tactic.

Skip Diplomacy; Iran Only Understands "Force and Power"

17. (C) The Under Secretary relayed the same concerns on Iran to Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Mohammed Al-Sager. Al-Sager shared Dr. Mohammed's views about Iran's nuclear program, but said the GOI only understands "force and power." He too was critical of articles in the U.S. press about military action against Iran and explained that the Arab world interprets these articles as U.S. support for Israeli interests.

Article 98 Will Pass....Eventually

18. (C) Commenting on the status of the Article 98 Agreement, Al-Sager said the agreement was still with his committee and he anticipated members would approve it and send it to the full Parliament within the month. Nonetheless, he criticized the GOK, saying it did not push hard enough for speed ratification. He predicted that fundamentalists and Islamists would have a "field day" attacking the U.S. when the agreement goes to the floor, but that with pressure from the GOK, it would easily pass. He encouraged Ambassador LeBaron to press Dr. Mohammed, who earlier told Bolton the Agreement was on the fast-track, on the need for the prompt and decisive action.

U.S. Too Soft on Fundamentalists

19. (C) Turning to security developments, he said post-9/11, the U.S. did not place ample pressure on Islamist and fundamentalist groups. He said there was too much pressure in other sectors, but recommend the U.S. press the GOK and

other governments to respond more swiftly and firmly against political Islam. He was particularly critical of Islamist universities, arguing that the Arab world needed doctors, lawyers, engineers, and computer programmers, not PhDs in Shari'a.

Iraqi Elections: A Learning Experience

¶10. (C) Responding to Bolton's question about Iraqi elections, Al-Sager said he was opposed to the timing of the elections and did not believe the Iraqi people were ready. He, however, agreed with the Under Secretary that elections were a learning opportunity for the Iraqi people and would give them a greater stake in the future of the country. He supported a significant Sunni presence in the elected government, hoped PM Allawi would be the one to form the new government, and recommended an increased focus on rebuilding the oil and gas sectors.

¶11. (U) Under Secretary Bolton has cleared this message.

¶12. (U) Baghdad: Minimize considered.

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